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CHINA-UK: Compromise on Hong Kong Reached

At least 1,500 Hong Kong students yesterday protested a compromise agreement between London and Beijing on the pace and scope of democratization in Hong Kong; that accord had been reached the day before after months of verbal sparring. The agreement falls far short of local demands for free, open elections by the year 2000, and grassroots organizations are accusing the UK of selling out Hong Kong in return for improved relations with China. The Basic Law Drafting Committee approved the compromise by a two-thirds majority yesterday.

More protests may occur this weekend as the British come under new criticism for bowing to pressure from Beijing to slow democratization. Local legislators may vent their anger by vetoing government policies, especially on key issues such as funding for Vietnamese refugee camps, and put increased pressure on London to let more Hong Kong residents emigrate to the UK.